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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended for using in helping students build their self-esteem, self-confidence, and communications, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. The materials, which were originally developed to build self-esteem among older adults and were redesigned to help single female heads of households aged 25 to 50, may be used within the classroom or as a separate workshop series. The first activity provided is intended to allow students to get to know one another, interact verbally, and think about how they view and treat themselves. The second activity is intended to teach students to schedule time for themselves and learn to appreciate themselves. Self-image and realizing one's positive attributes are covered in the third activity. The fourth activity deals with verbal and nonverbal communication, and the final activity is intended to help students develop decision-making and problem-solving skills. Each activity includes some or all of the following: objectives, a list of materials needed, and facilitator guidelines for use in presenting the activity. (A report describing the project during which the instructional materials were revised is included along with the curriculum guide.) (MN)

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BUILDING A BETTER YOU

Final Report
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Pennsylvania State Department of Education
Division of Adult Basic Education
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ABSTRACT

"Building A Better You" was an adaptation of material initially created to build self-esteem among the elderly. The Lutheran Settlement House Women's Program re-designed the activites and workshops to build self-esteem, communication skills, problem solving and decision making techniques among women between 25 and 50, predominantly single heads of households. The activities developed can either be utilized within the classroom as a separate workshop series.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Lutheran Settlemtent House Women's Program is a multifaceted, non-sectarian community based organization that provides employment services, counselling and education to the women and men in the Kensington/Fishtown section of Philadelphia. Approximately 80% of the participants are women. The Women's Program provides education, cultural and self-development workshops, a bilingual 24 hour domestic violence hotline, job and training counselling and placement, clerical/ computer literacy training, computer-aided drafting training, a displaced homemaker project, personal counselling, free childcare for all participants and a day care center.

The Women's Program is housed in the Lutheran Settlement House which has been providing services to the community since 1911. In 1976 the Women's Program was established to meet the needs of women within the community. The Women's Program surveyed community residents who responded that they needed and wanted education and employment. To meet these needs, the Women's Program established classes, counselling and training programs.

Since 1976, the Women's Program has been preparing people to take the high school equivalency exam. In 1979 the Education Program was expanded, due to funding from the Pennsylvania State Department of Education, to include adult basic education and basic literacy classes.

The students who attend classes are predominantly poor and working class Black, White and Hispanic women (18-50) who have dropped out of high school. Approximately 70% of these women are single heads of households, unemployed and/or on welfare. Because these women have concerns and responsibilities outside the classroom, the Women's Program endeavors to create curriculum materials reflective of their special needs and to develop a teaching methodology that treats students as adults with multiple responsibilities.

Initially this material was developed by teachers during their non-teaching time. Recognizing the significance and need for these materials, the Pennsylvania State Department of Education awarded a grant to the Women's Program to further develop materials focused on Parenting, Unemployment and Education.

In 1982, additional material entitled Hispanic Women's Concerns was developed, and in 1983 the two manuals were refined and combined into Women in the Community. In 1983, another curriculum manual entilted, Teaching Reading Through Oral Histories was developed, and in 1984 Teaching Writing To Beginning Readers and Family Violence: Education for Change were compiled.

Despite the utilization of these manuals, teachers still noted that students, particularly women students, continued to suffer from a lack of confidence and a poor self-image. This occurs, according to Clara Thompson, a prominent psychologist, because women are discriminated against and are treated as a lower class. Women's salaries are significantly lower than men's, their unemployment rate is higher and societal expectations channel them into low-paying fields.

In order to deal with this internalized oppression, the Women's Program decided to adapt a previous 310 project, Building A Better You: A Demonstration in Elderly Enrichment, to a younger population, to build self-esteem, self-confidence, communications skills, decision making skills and problem solving skills so that students at the Women's Program would feel more confident and might be better able to solve problems that might force them to withdraw from school again.

OBJECTIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The goal for Building A Better You was to decrease attrition among adult women basic education students between the ages of 25 and 55 through the adaptation of the curriculum project developed by the Mon Valley Progress Council entitled, Building A Better You: A Demonstration In Elderly Enrichment.

Objective 1: To review curriculum lesson plans and activities to determine which exercises were suitable to a younger population as learning materials for classroom use, develop adapted material into exercises to be utilized in the classroom and to utilize the material in two classes. The Mon Valley material was divided into four sections: Self-Esteem, Communication Skills, Decision Making and Problem Solving. Each section consisted of four classes, ranging from two to six hours each. The exercises were reviewed and new exercises were developed on the four main sec ions (Self-Esteem, Communications Skills, Decision Making and Problem Solving) more relevant to a younger population. The time required was reduced to a total of five classes, ranging from one to two and a half hours each.

In the first section, "Self-Esteem," the original material contained the following exercises: a name game in which people introduced each other, the voting on values and establishing of a values continuum, the making of animal sounds and the locating of people making the same sounds, the interviewing of other participants publicly, and the discussion of responses to questions, the listing of things participants valued, sharing memories of happy times, drawing hex signs that reflected them and creating a dream world. In revising this material, it was decided to separate the introduction session from the session on "Self-Esteem" to allow the teacher time to introduce the course and discuss academics. The introductory activity utilized involved saying one's name and describing oneself with a word that began with the same letter as her/his name. The next person then introduced herself/himself and everyone who preceded her/him.

There were two sessions on Self-Esteem. The first session involved each student listing his/her activities for one day and activities each would like to do but were unable to do. The participant then put the name of the family member who benefitted from the activity beside each one. Participants were then asked to list how many activities actually benefitted them. Discussion then followed about finding time for oneself.

The second session on self-esteem involved the lists created during the first session. In the second session, participants list the activities they perform each day, the skills involved, the marketability of each skill and needed skills for the job market.

The second section, in the original material "Communication" contained lectures on communication and the following exercises: making objects out of construction paper that reflected the participant, sharing how much one trusts someone else in the group, taking a trust walk in which one person leads someone else who is blindfolded, positive statements about each other and answering a questionnaire on how each person expresses his/her feelings.

In the revised material, the communication skills section was divided into verbal and non-verbal exercises. During the first part of the class, students were to act out situations described on index cards without using words. The situations were: a teacher meeting with a parent, a husband and wife arguing, a welfare recipient at the welfare office, an irate tenant confronting a difficult landlord, someone applying for a job. The class had to guess the situation. The same scenarios were then dramatized with words. Verbal and non-verbal clues and communication were compared and discussed.

The third and fourth sections, Decision Making and Problem Solving, were one section in the original material. Participants heard lectures on decision making, feelings, and action. They then participated in the following exercises: brainstorming alternative solutions to problems, constructing a consequences guide, creating a forced choice ladder, listing responses in rank order, establishing time lines for change, reviewing behavior and inventorying how they spent their time.

In the revised material, decision making and problem solving were combined, as in the original. The only exercise involved asking to pick one thing they would like to change in their lives and develop a time line for affecting this change.

Two classes were involved in this project. Both classes consisted predominantly of women between 25 and 55 who were considering entering the job market after being homemakers for a period of time. There were 28 people enrolled and 22 remained in classes: 14 completed the GED exam, 3 initiated testing, and 8 plan to continue next year. Six of the graduates from these classes have entered Community College of Philadelphia and one was selected for the academically talented classes at Community College of Philadelphia. Two other class members are in the process of being interviewed for VISTA positions as administrative assistants at the YWCA in Northeast Philadelphia and one person entered a nurse's training program.

The classes involved in this project had a 50% completion rate, a 29% continuation rate, and 21% drop out rate. Overall Women's Program classes for the past two years maintain a 35% completion rate, a 42% continuation rate and a 23% drop out rate.

Objective II: To develop specific workshops on self-esteem, communication skills, decision making and problem solving and to conduct these workshops at the Women's Program. The workshop series was divided into four workshops. The workshops utilized the same exercises as the classroom except that the session on decision making involved writing an obituary and deciding what changes one would make so that the obituary matched one's life and the session on problem solving focused on the problems facing single heads of household.

Workshop participants included students at the Women's Program and individuals from the Diagnostic and Rehabilitation Center and individuals who responded to the press release. The evaluations state that participants felt it was useful to think about time for themselves.

PROCEDURES

This project was conceived of as a means to enhance students' self-image, communications skills, decision making and problem solving abilities. The curriculum developer reviewed the materials in the Mon Valley curriculum, consulted with the Women's Program displaced homemaker specialist, the job search instructor and the counse or and revised the exercises to ensure appropriateness to a younger population with different time constraints. The material was then tested in two classes and the teachers offered suggestions and ideas to ensure feasibility and practicality.

After the classroom activities were refined, the workshops were created, advertised and conducted. Workshop participants offered verbal and written feedback and the workshops were revised and finalized.

Both the classroom activities guide and the workshops will be typed and disseminated to programs with adult basic education classes during the summer.

EVALUATION

The initial evaluation procedure stated that students and participants would evaluate the materials and staff would evaluate the project's impact on retention. The actual impact of the project was not only retention, but on students' futures.

When the students wrote out their daily activities, the curriculum developer who reviewed the information was able to note comments like, "same routine - Boy, is this boring - I miss working", "fighting depression", "try to keep husband from suicide", "try to work things out with my ex-husband."The curriculum developer was then able to meet with the teacher and the teacher was able to encourage the student to see a counselor, enter job search and begin to handle problems that could otherwise interfere with class attendance.

The written evaluations were positive, but more impressive are the accomplishments of the students who participated in the classes and workshops. More students from these classes went on to higher education than from other classes.

CONCLUSION

"Building A Better You" met its goals and objectives. Students who participated in the project did remain in class in greater numbers than did students in other classes. Students who participated in the project also enrolled in college and training programs in greater numbers than students in other classes.

DISSEMINATION

Dissemination will occur by modeling the classroom activities and workshop guidelines to the Private Industry Council for JTPA funded classes, to the Mayor's Commission on Literacy, to the Kensington Literacy Coalition, to the Philadelphia Literacy Network, and to ADVANCE.

BUILDING A BETTER YOU

Classroom Activities

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This material was developed by Carria Hawkings, Curriculum Developer under the supervision of Kathy Reilly, Education Coordinator and Carol Goertzel, Women's Program Director, with the cooperation of Carol Kallas, Chris Bush and Jane McGovern, teachers at the Women's Program

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ACTIVITY I

First Class Meeting

OBJECTIVES:

1. To get to know one another by name.
2. To verbally interact with one another.
3. To think about how we view and treat ourselves.
4. To provide time for "self".

PREPARATION:

At the first class meeting, the facilitator will need to build an atmosphere of trust and sharing. This is essential for reciprocal learning to take place. Seating arrangement is best in a circle to promote a sense of togetherness and equality. The facilitator should choose a seat at random within the circle not at the head.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

None

ACTIVITY: Who Am I? (Introduction Activity)

Purpose:
1. This activity is to help students learn the names of the other students.
2. To provide the facilitator with some information about how each student views herself/himself.

NOTE: IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THIS ACTIVITY BE REPEATED AT THE END OF THE YEAR TO COMPARE STUDENTS' INITIAL SELF IMAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS TO HOW THEY LATER SEE THEMSELVES.

PROCEDURE:

1. The facilitator begins by first saying her/his name and using the first letter of her/his name, say a word beginning with that letter to describe herself/himself.

Example: My name is Carria and I'm cautious.

2. The next person identifies herself/himself and describes herself/himself (in, with) one word that begins with the first letter of her/his name. It must be a positive word. She/he must then repeat the name of the facilitator and her/his decriptive word.

Example: My name is Fran and I'm friendly, her name is Carria and she's cautious.

3. This process continues until each student has identified herself/himself and repeated the name and descriptive adjective of each person who preceded her/him.

4. The facilitator then must recite each student's name and descriptive adjective.

ACTIVITY II

It's My Time

OBJECTIVES:

1. To encourage students to think about how they treat and feel about themselves.
2. To learn how to schedule time for themselves.
3. To learn to appreciate themselves.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Paper and pen or pencil.

PRECEDURE:

1. Each person is given two sheets of paper and asked to list:
   A. All of the activities they perform within the course of one week on a day-to-day basis;
   B. All the things they would like to do but are unable to do.
2. Students are then asked the number of persons in their households and given a blank sheet of paper for each family member. They then write the name of one family member on each sheet of paper. This includes a sheet for themselves.
3. Each student is asked to review their list of activities and assign each activity from their activity list to a family member. Students may list an activity for more than one family member.
4. Students are then asked to total the activities for each household member and compare the total for each member to the total things they do for themselves.
5. Students are then asked to brainstorm ways in which they can find more time for "self" and to do the things they want to do for themselves.

6. Students are then asked to complete a sample weekly schedule of their activities.
7. Students are asked to rearrange the weekly schedule to include time for "self" and to include within their weekly schedule one or two of the things they would like to do for themselves.
8. A discussion should follow this activity focusing on how students feel about finding time for 'self" and doing some of the things they like to do. Do they experience a sense of guilt? Should they feel guilty? Is it wrong to want to do things for "self" instead of doing something or someone in the family? Is it important to have time for "self"?

ACTIVITY III

I Can Do Many Things

OBJECTIVES:

1. To improve student self image.
2. To identify attributes students possess but are not aware they have.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Paper and pen or pencil.
2. Chalk and blackboard.

PROCEDURE:

1. Facilitator returns list of activities students made from previous activity (Activity #II).
2. Students are asked to look at the list of activities listed and to take a clean sheet of paper and divide it into three sections. Facilitator does the same thing on the blackboard using the following headings:

ACTIVITY SKILLS MARKETABILITY NEEDED SKILLS

3. Students are asked to list all the activities from their list in column 1 under the heading ACTIVITY.
4. Facilitator then asks students to identify a skill they must have in order to perform each activity. (Facilitator may have to suggest a few skills to get students started).
5. Students are then asked to identify which of the skills they listed that can be utilized in a job or career and to identify the job or career. This information is to be written in column #3.

6. After completion of this activity, discussion should be focused on the marketability of skills students already possess, how to further develop those skills, identifying additional skills needed, and/or make career choices or changes.

ACTIVITY IV

Communication: Verbal and Non-Verbal

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop good verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
2. To indicate the importance of non-verbal communication.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Situations to act out written on separate pieces of paper.
2. Container in which to mix the scenarios.

PART ONE: NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS:

PROCEDURE:

1. Facilitator writes on separate pieces of paper different scenaries which students are to act out (pantomine) that are folded and placed in a container. Possible topics on which to write should be situations in which may be or have been involved; e.g. pertaining to school, landlord/tenant, police, home, welfare.
2. Students are divided into pairs and asked to pick a slip of paper from the container. Each pair should read the situation and be given five (5) minutes in which to pantomine it.
3. After each presentation, class discussion should follow for about 10 minutes based on the following questions.
   A. Which body movements actually conveyed the situation and which did not?
   B. Of those that did not convey the message, what did those movements convey?

NOTE: ONLY HALF OF THE CLASS SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS PART

PART TWO: VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS:

PROCEDURE:

1. Repeat Step 2 in Part One and ask each pair to act out the situation verbally after each partner has read the scenario.
2. Repeat Step 3 in Part One. During the discussion, ask students to pay close attention to any hand movements, eye contact.
3. Additional questions that can be asked are:
   A. Is there a cultural difference in how people express themselves? If so, what are the differences? Does this difference extend to the different sexes? If so, in what way?
   B. Do people dress differently depending upon who they are communicating with or what they are communicating about? If so, what are some of the differences?

ACTIVITY V.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

OBJECTIVE:

1. To enable students to answer the question; "Can and how do I make changes in my life?"
2. To help students realize their plans and dreams.
3. To help students make conscious decisions and honor commitments.
4. To assist students in developing analytical skills.
5. To assist students in prioritizing things.
6. To provide students with additional choices for problem solving.

PROCEDURE:

1. The facilitator writes on the board "Something I would like to change in my life is....."
2. The class is asked to think about the topic and to give a response.
3. The facilitator writes all responses on the board. There are no right or wrong answers.
4. Students are then asked to choose one of the things listed on the board and to make a list of all the things they would have to do to bring about the desired change.
5. Students are next to number the things they listed according to priority and the order in which each thing should take place.
6. Participants are asked to develop a time line for effecting the change based on their steps beginning with a starting date and with a projected date of resolution.
7. Each student is given five minutes to present to the class her/his plan, why she/he chose that particular thing and the starting date to begin to resolve it.

8. Each student gives the facilitator a copy of her/his time line and periodically reports to the class what is evolving based on her/his time line. Questions to be raised at each discussion are:
   A. Did other obstacles occur that were unforeseen? How did you handle them?, etc. Students can at this time share suggestions and/or similar experiences if appropriate.
9. Students are to keep a log of events as they occur and their feelings about each phase of the plan.
10. During update discussions, it may be helpful to have a counselor present in order to identify those students who may need one-to-one counselling.
11. Facilitators may wish to set up a schedule for student update presentations to the class based on each students' individual time line.